Iris Feng

Queen of mold

In “The Queen of Mold”, Ruth Reichl informs the readers that food can “be a way of making sense of the world” by bringing her family together and understanding characters of individuals. She reveals her purpose with a family anecdote through imagery, simile, arrangement, and presents with a casual, informal tone.

Reichl uses vivid description to describe the awful taste of her mom’s food. Her dad describes that the unknown “food” her mom made tasted like “cat toes…rotted barley, pigs’ snouts…moldy chocolate.” She emphasizes that the food is not only unappetizing but also dangerous through the exaggeration that her “mission was to keep Mom from killing anybody who came to dinner.” Her father’s dramatic reaction and her own narrative present a sharp contrast to the ending. Her dad looks admiringly at her mother as a “Queen” and compares the dangerous food to a “masterpiece”. Although her mother is absentminded, the love within the family and especially between her dad and mom out values the taste of the food. Reichl speaks to those who share similar family absurdness and informs them that food brings the family together.

Reichl also uses simile to convey her discovery about food. “Like a hearing child born to deaf parents”, Reichl is used to protecting guests from eating her mom’s food. At the same time, she discovers that “how people ate, and where” reveals who they are. She suggests that food and behaviors relevant to food demonstrate one’s inner character.